



LANDFIRE

LESSONS LEARNED: Issue 4

Local Experts Develop Reference Models for the Great Basin and Mojave Desert

Thirty ecologists and fire managers from the USFS, BLM, NPS, USGS, TNC, private industry, and academia met in Salt Lake City, UT, November 15-19, 2004 to contribute their expertise to the LANDFIRE project. Participants from across Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington devoted five days to documenting their knowledge about ecosystem structure, succession, and fire and other disturbance dynamics into quantitative ecological models of reference (pre-Euro American settlement) conditions.



Clarifying varying definitions

As we move forward (this is the **fourth** LANDFIRE modeling workshop completed), we're picking up a great deal from particular feedback. At SLC we learned:

- Definitions of historical range of variability and potential vegetation vary between managers and scientists.
- Understanding and crosswalking different concepts and data sets are key to maximizing the effectiveness of new tools.
- Feedback from managers on concepts and model attributes is improving the utility of LANDFIRE products (see sidebar, below left).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) develops conceptual ecological models for ecological site descriptions, which are commonly used by BLM practitioners and others in land management. These state-and-transition models are similar in concept to the quantified VDDT models developed for LANDFIRE, but are at a finer level of resolution. Through discussion of similarities and differences, and collaboration on model development, the two efforts can be synergistic.

Filling in a Rangeland Gap

The workshop, facilitated by The Nature Conservancy and the USFS Missoula Fire Sciences Lab, was designed to **refine existing Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) reference condition** models for the Great Basin, Utah High Plateau, and Mojave Desert (Great Basin Zone). Following a short briefing on the history and objectives of the LANDFIRE project, experts **refined** old models or **developed new models** specific to this shrub-dominated region. They were able to provide more detailed information on sagebrush and woodland types than was developed in previous FRCC workshops and helped map new potential natural vegetation groups across the region. **Twenty-six** potential natural vegetation groups were modeled by the end of the week.

Look for more online at <http://landfire.gov>.

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